

African American History Month: Shirley Ann Jackson

Shirley Ann Jackson is a physicist, and the current president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She received her Ph.D. in theoretical elementary particle physics from MIT in 1973, becoming the first African American woman to earn a doctorate from MIT and to head the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Her research specialty is in theoretical condensed matter physics, especially layered systems, and the physics of opto-electronic materials. Prior to her current position, Dr. Jackson was Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission; a theoretical physicist conducting basic research at the former AT&T Bell Laboratories; and a professor of theoretical physics at Rutgers University.

Dr. Jackson was inducted into National Women's Hall of Fame in 1998 for "her significant contributions as a distinguished scientist and advocate for education, science, and public policy". More recently she was named one of the 50 Most Important Women in Science by Discover Magazine. She continues to advocate on behalf of women and minorities in the sciences.